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In-Depth Analysis of “Summer Rain” by Amy Lowell

After 1914, a new style of poetry emerged with Amy Lowell as a contributor. Imagism, this new style that came from the Modern movement, called for poets to focus their poetry on visual, concrete images that had the ability to produce a set of emotions. This focus on an image is seen in Amy Lowell’s poem, “Summer Rain.” This poem centered in on the image of rain and the feelings expressed during a rainstorm. Although this poem is not lengthy, it provides the reader with a new way to view rainstorms, particularly in a positive light. The tone, imagery, figurative language, and point of view all contribute to the overall theme of the poem and the purpose that Lowell was trying to portray.

The author’s true feelings and point of view are recognized in this poem because the speaker of the poem is the author herself. It is proven because the author refers directly to herself in the poem when she states “me” (876.9). The line “But to me the darkness,” (876.7) signifies the author’s own feelings about the darkness and the rainstorm, which are the subjects of this poem. Since Lowell interjects her own opinion about the subject she writes about, it is evident that the speaker is Lowell. This offers insight into her poetry and how she turns a normally dreary event such as rain into a positive light, which is what Imagist poetry is supposed to do by evoking emotions from her audience. Lowell’s audience can be viewed as the readers of her poem because she calls upon the audience during her poem. Although the “you” (876.9) can also be interpreted as another subject in the poem that is experiencing the rainstorm that the speaker is going through, Lowell involved the “you” in the poem to involve the reader and intensify the emotions that come forth because it allows the reader to feel included in the poem. Since the topic of this poem is rain, as can be inferred from the title “Summer Rain,” that is the image that Lowell focuses upon, but instead of calling upon emotions of darkness and despair, the author turns the image of rain into a positive object.

Along with the speaker’s point of view, the tone also contributes to the overall theme of rain being a symbol for positivity. At the beginning of this poem, the overall tone is inferred to be one of negativity and depression, yet around the midpoint the poem shifts into what Lowell’s purpose truly was which was to depict rain in a uplifting light. Verbs such as “rattled” and “clashed” (876.5) add to the negative tone at the beginning because when rain is described as clashing or making much noise, it can be viewed as something as depressing as a torrential downpour. In addition when rain continues from a long period of time, it normally produces a sad effect because it means that people need to stay indoors and away from the rain. Lowell describes that the rain is continuing when she mentions “there was not a pinpoint of silence” (876.4). As previously stated, this line produces a depressing emotion because the continuity of rain is never viewed as a positive thing. However, the tone shifts when Lowell starts describing the rain and its effects with elevating and happy verbs. For example, when Lowell depicts the “slats of the shutters” (876.6) as they “danced and glittered” (876.6), it turns the mood of the poem around. From this point on, Lowell portrays rain in a positive view. Since this is Lowell’s overall purpose, the overall tone of the poem can be described as a positive, complimentary tone.

Lowell’s involvement of figurative language, imagery, and sound intensify the poem and contribute to illustrating the rain as a joyful event. Certain images like “orange torches” (876.10) and “the wall of cool, silver rain!” (876.11) provide the readers with visualizations that allow them to form their own opinions on the joy of rain. The “orange torches” are employed to describe the “words that were whispered” (876.9) to the speaker of the poem. The brightness of these torches is to symbolize the brightness and happiness that can come forth during a normally dreary time like a rainstorm. Lowell furthers this meaning when she states “torches against the wall of cool, silver rain” (876.11) signifying that the words and happiness that is brought about by Lowell in the poem can overtake the despair and depression that can be brought on by rainstorms. The images provoke emotions about a rainstorm that people typically experience like peace and calmness, but Lowell adds happiness and joy to those emotions. Lowell also brings figurative language into the poem through personification and irony. The personification allows Lowell to showcase the rain as the subject of this poem by giving the rain human characteristics. The “drops fell and flattened” (876.2) which supplies the reader with an understanding that the rain and its elements are the topics of this poem. The irony in this poem contributes to the positive view on rain in this poem because Lowell depicts that “darkness was red-gold” (876.7). Darkness is normally associated with colors of black and gray, but since Lowell describes the darkness as red-gold, it provides the image of the rain in a happier perspective because the lively colors of red and gold are more uplifting. Lastly, the sounds of “Ping!-Ping!” (876.4) give emphasis to the rain because it reinforces the meaning and allows the reader to experience what a person actually hears during a rainstorm. Overall all of these elements contribute to portraying rain in a positive light to the reader, which is the theme and purpose of this poem.

“Summer Rain” is an exemplary poem to describe the poems that came forth from the Imagism period because it focuses on the sole object of rain and it provokes emotions from the reader of happiness and joy. The tone, figurative language, point of view and the many other elements this poem consisted of relay Lowell’s theme and purpose to the reader and allow the reader to view how rain can be a positive experience.

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